
U.S. Department of the Interior • U.S. Geological Survey

MINERAL INDUSTRY SURVEYS

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FLUORSPAR IN THE FIRST QUARTER 1997

There were two sales from the Defense National Stockpile (DNSC) reported since publication of the fourth quarter 1996 fluorspar report. On April 2, Sogem-Afrimet Inc. was awarded 5,440 metric tons (6,000 short dry tons [sdt]) of metallurgical-grade fluorspar for an approximate market value of \$220,000. On April 7, Seaforth Mineral & Ore Company was awarded 9,070 tons (10,000 sdt) of acid grade for an approximate market value of \$750,000. The DNSC has reached its sales authorization limit (50,000 sdt) for metallurgical grade for the current fiscal year. The DNSC has sold about 51,000 tons (56,000sdt) of acid grade so far, which leaves an additional 112,000 tons (124,000 sdt) authorized for disposal during the current fiscal year.

Because of lower Chinese export fees, strong competition at the supply and export level in China, and slowing demand in North America, it appears that fluorspar prices are dropping. List prices in the June issue of Industrial Minerals magazine (IM) were \$130 to \$137 per metric ton for U.S. Gulf port, dry basis, acidspar, they were \$142 to \$152 in January. The first quarter import statistics already are displaying the lower prices for South African material. The statistics for Chinese imports do not show much movement in overall prices, although individual shipments were recorded under \$140 per ton. Industry sources indicate that Chinese import prices could drop \$2 to \$3 per ton in the second quarter, and by as much as another \$10 per ton by the end of the year. List prices for Chinese acidspar in Europe, which are reported by IM in

dollars, have also dropped since the beginning of the year. This decrease could be due in large part to the strengthening of the dollar since the end of 1996. According to the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank dollar index, which compares the strength of the U.S. dollar to 18 European currencies, the value of the dollar increased by 8% from November 1996 through May 1997. Currently, IM lists Chinese acidspar, wet filtercake, CIF Rotterdam at \$130 to \$140 per ton (it was \$145 to \$155 per ton in January).

Due to the unreliability of the U.S. trade data for fluorspar imports and the delays in reporting, fluorspar imports by country by Custom's District and their calculated unit values frequently disagree with information on shipments and prices collected from industry sources. It is therefore difficult at times to document price movements in the fluorspar trade that are reported by buyers or dealers. In the past 6 to 9 months, particular problems seem to have arisen over the value of Chinese shipments arriving in the Gulf of Mexico. Readers who access the Bureau of the Census trade statistics directly should keep in mind that the U.S. Geological Survey frequently modifies the numbers based on information from industry sources.

The 1996 Annual Fluorspar Review has been completed and is available on MINES FaxBack (Doc. No. 280496) or on the Internet. Refer to the top of this page for the FaxBack telephone number or the Internet address. Individuals on the fluorspar mailing list should receive their hard copy soon.

TABLE 1
SALIENT FLUORSPAR STATISTICS 1/

(Metric tons unless otherwise specified)

	First quarter 1996	Second quarter 1996	Third quarter 1996	Fourth quarter 1996	First quarter 1997	Total year to date 1997
Shipments	W	--	--	--	--	--
Imports for consumption	179,000	118,000	127,000	88,200 r/	147,000	147,000
Value per ton, c.i.f. U.S. port, acid grade	\$140	\$141	\$145	\$142	\$141	\$141 2/
Value per ton, c.i.f. U.S. port, metallurgical	\$96	\$97	\$99	\$120	\$95	\$95 2/
Exports	9,180	6,950	17,500	28,300	12,600	12,600
End of quarter stocks: consumer 3/	105,000	103,000	117,000 r/	99,200 r/	143,000	143,000
Fluorspar equivalent of imported hydrofluoric acid 4/	31,000	39,800	34,600	18,100	32,100	32,100
Fluorspar equivalent of imported cryolite	1,840	2,430	1,750	1,570	2,350	2,350
Quarterly reported fluorspar consumption	143,000	119,000	140,000 r/	131,000 r/	127,000	127,000

r/ Revised. W Withheld to avoid disclosing company proprietary data.

1/ Data are rounded to three significant digits.

2/ Average value for year to date 1996.

3/ Does not include material purchased from the National Defense Stockpile by traders or indirect consumers.

4/ Does not include hydrofluoric acid from foreign trade zone.

TABLE 2
CONSUMPTION OF FLUORSPAR BY END USE AND ASSAY RANGE 1/
(DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN IN THE UNITED STATES)

(Metric tons)

End use or product	Fourth quarter 1996			First quarter 1997			1997 Year to date
	More than 97% calcium fluoride	Not more than 97% calcium fluoride	Total	More than 97% calcium fluoride	Not more than 97% calcium fluoride	Total	
Hydrofluoric acid and aluminum fluoride	119,000 r/	--	119,000 r/	116,000	--	116,000	116,000
Basic oxygen furnaces	--	2,580	2,580	--	1,400	1,400	1,400
Electric furnaces	W	4,890	4,890	W	5,080	5,080	5,080
Other uses or products 2/ r/	3,390 r/	1,310 r/	4,690 r/	3,280	1,370	4,650	4,650
Total	123,000 r/	8,770	131,000 r/	119,000	7,850	127,000	127,000
Stocks, end of quarter	88,200 r/	11,100	99,200 r/	131,000	12,400	143,000	143,000

r/ Revised. W Withheld to avoid disclosing company proprietary data.

1/ Data are rounded to three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

2/ Includes acid grade used in electric furnaces, enamel, glass and fiberglass, steel castings, and welding rod coatings.

TABLE 3
U.S.IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF FLUORSPAR, BY COUNTRY 1/ AND VALUE 2/ 3/

(Metric tons unless otherwise specified)

	First quarter 1996		Second quarter 1996		Third quarter 1996		Fourth quarter 1996		First quarter 1997		Total year to date	
	Quantity	Value (thousands)	Quantity	Value (thousands)	Quantity	Value (thousands)	Quantity	Value (thousands)	Quantity	Value (thousands)	Quantity	Value (thousands)
Containing more than 97% calcium fluoride:												
Austria	--	--	--	--	175	\$58	173	\$39	34	\$30	34	\$30
China 4/	146,000	\$20,700	48,600	\$7,110	98,700	14,300	61,800 r/	8,900 r/	95,900	13,600	95,900	13,600
France	18	9	--	--	36	19	--	--	18	9	18	9
Mexico	3,580	506	4,550	631	5,810	788	4,180	602	8,830	1,260	8,830	1,260
South Africa	20,500	2,510	42,800	5,760	15,900	2,270	20,300	2,710	25,000	3,400	25,000	3,400
Total	170,000	23,800	96,000	13,500	121,000	17,400	86,500 r/	12,300 r/	130,000	18,300	130,000	18,300
Containing not more than 97% calcium fluoride:												
Canada	53	16	70	23	83	28	157	55	97	35	97	35
Germany	--	--	--	--	--	--	194	20	1	6	1	6
Mexico	9,300	883	21,600	2,070	6,010	575	1,390	133	16,500	1,540	16,500	1,540
Total	9,350	889	21,700	2,100	6,090	603	1,740	208	16,600	1,580	16,600	1,580

r/ Revised.

1/ Imports for consumption include imports of immediate entry, and warehouse withdrawals.

2/ C.i.f. at U.S. ports.

3/Data are rounded to three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

4/ Data does not agree with published Bureau of the Census data due to adjustments made by the U.S. Geological Survey.

Source: Bureau of the Census.

TABLE 4
IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF HYDROFLUORIC ACID 1/

(Metric tons unless otherwise specified)

	First quarter 1996		Second quarter 1996		Third quarter 1996		Fourth quarter 1996		First quarter 1997		Total year to date 1997	
	Quantity	Value 2/ (thousands)	Quantity	Value 2/ (thousands)	Quantity	Value 2/ (thousands)	Quantity	Value 2/ (thousands)	Quantity	Value 2/ (thousands)	Quantity	Value 2/ (thousands)
Canada	17	\$71	32	\$105	39	\$99	18	\$63	1,870	\$2,310	1,870	\$2,310
France	55	59	54	57	107	124	56	64	73	91	73	91
Germany	50	96	20	45	23	73	72	118	38	99	38	99
Greece	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	19	20	19	20
Japan	79	286	174	643	138	519	198	710	154	588	154	588
Mexico	20,500	18,800	26,200	24,600	22,800	21,300	11,700	11,000	19,300	18,100	19,300	18,100
Total	20,700	19,300	26,500	25,400	23,100	22,100	12,100	12,000	21,400	21,200	21,400	21,200

1/ Data are rounded to three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

2/ C.i.f. at U.S. ports.

Source: Bureau of the Census.